

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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An Educational Group

The brain is wider than the sky.
For, put them side to side,
The one the other will include
With ease, and you beside.
- Emily Dickinson.

In finishing up our 55th year of teaching (the past year part time) we are looking forward to a vacation. This past week of May we will have the great pleasure of visits with old friends - Theresa Rudolph - trainer of the greats in figure skating, and Gildo di Nunzio - trainer of Opera stars at the Metropolitan. Theresa was a member of the old Chicago Civic Opera days when ballet in opera was really BALLET and not as it is today - simply supering. Gildo will attract a group of old friends at Joan Stone's apartment for a get together.

During the short Summer Course we expect to see our Ohio group from the schools of Myrl Laurence and Phyllis de Weese. Peggy Lyman came from that rich source for a good many summer courses. Barbara Seaver Stoval who dates back to the days of the Old Grand will also be here. Back from college will be Sue Randall, Carolyn Cowie and Barbara Glover.

After the summer course we will head west on Amtrak to visit my nephew in Oregon and possibly a week or so on the sea shore. If plans materialize we will head south to San Francisco and Los Angeles where we hope to visit with our many Stone Camryn friends of earlier days - Theresa Rudolph, Byron Kaye, Louis Yetter, Henry Swisko, Donna Mills, Eddie Noll, Spiro Pastos, Michael Shannon, Raymond Weamer, Jack Tygett, Louise Glenn and many others.

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THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY has started a rather ambitious Dance Library and we recently sent our first allotment of books, programs, and pictures. We also sent the Lillian Moore 'family tree' giving the history of the teaching of Classical Ballet.

Among the 33 books we gave in this set the following authors are represented - Zorn - Laban - Kinney - Levison - Guest - Vaganova - De Garmo - Shaw - Thetard - Sandoz - Dodsworth - Cellarius -

Bournonville - Beaumont - H'Doubler and other well known writers on Dance.

The Library is particularly interested in obtaining a complete set of the UPSTAIRS CLUB BULLETINS for its history department. Every issue is out of print and I know many people have carefully collected them through the past. Is there anyone who would either give or loan their set to the Library - complete or incomplete? In all there must be at least 125 issues. If you are willing to help, please contact -

Diane Haskell
Curator of Modern Manuscripts
Newberry Library
60 West Walton, Chicago, IL 60610

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THE GOLDEN YEARS OF DANCE (Are not now!)

Those of us who have been part of the dance audience since the early 30's can easily miss most of the dance companies today without any great loss. I, especially, feel extremely fortunate to have arrived on the scene when the early Monte Carlo de Ballet Russe burst forth upon us all. What an awakening it was for us all (and if the same thing could be seen exactly as it was then today - it would be equally successful).

Present day critics in their vast inexperience and ignorance of the past, have been known to write that the early Massine ballets probably were not very good. Their reasoning; that they are not very good with the modern companies (and I agree, but why?). That does not mean that the original choreography was inferior.

At this point let me say, as a choreographer, that any choreography is completely at the mercy of the dancers who are performing his creation. Any choreographer knows implicitly that the very best movement design can be totally ruined if it is not performed using all the elements of dance he is asking for.

During the past twenty five years, due to

Balanchine and the Modern dancers, the dance has become more and more abstract and meaningless. That was not true of Balanchine's early ballets in Ballet Russe. In the Massine period, Balanchine's ballets "La Concurrence" - "Cotillion" and "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" were delightful and expressive Story telling Ballets. I was later when he decided that he was creating THE truly American Ballet (the words are not mine, God forbid!) (but Joan Lawson's who truly believes it). That was when we began to get the cardboard faces, the pregnant stares, and the abstract meaningless movement - and the surly bows.

Today's dancers, generally, are all devoid of any character or dramatic training - which is a pity. And when the Robert Joffrey Company attempts the Massine Ballets - "Le Beau Danube" - "Gaite Parisiene" and the great dramatic ballet "Petruchka" - they are devoid of the true spirit and dramatic content of those ballets - so the choreographer is not getting what he intended. It is better that they continue with their Rock and Roll Ballets where they are at least in a modern Character.

The impact of the personal performances of the dancers in those early Ballet Russe Ballets in the 30's cannot be imagined if one had not witnessed it. In the early 30's - we saw nightly Leonide Massine, Vania Psota, Leon Woizikowski (one of my all time favorites) Edouard Borovansky and David Lichine in the male section. In the female department we had Alexandra Danilova (everybody's favorite), Tamara Toumanova, Tatiana Riabouchinska, Irina Baronova and a host of others, not any less in importance from a performance standpoint. To have seen Massine or Leon Danielian in "Le Gaite Parisienne" or Massine and Toumanova in "The Three Cornered Hat", or in any of the Ballets the delightful and witty performances of Woizikowski, Psota, Borovansky and Lichine gave one an appreciation of what great character could mean to impress an audience - which is something we have never seen since in any of the contemporary companies. One possible exception was the very early American Ballet Theatre performances.

Before coming to Chicago I was fortunate enough to have seen the great Anna Pavlova with her company, which included Alexander Volinine, Laurent Novikoff, Muriel Stuart, Edward Caton, and Hilda Butsova. This was my first impression of Classical Ballet. During the next ten years or so we were to see such artists as Uday Shankar, Harald Kreutzberg, Agna Enters, Martha Graham, Argentina, Mary Wigman, Argentita, Trudy Schoop, Shanta Rao, Serge Lifar, Vicente Escudero, Luis Lusillio, and many,

many others. Each of these artists were great individuals who went far beyond their special techniques in dance. It is this "Dance-plus" that I miss in the dancers of today.

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PREFACE to a lecture I gave on March 15th in 1964 in Woodstock Illinois in their lovely old theatre.

Few lecturers on Dance are teachers of Dance - and oddly enough very few of the writers on dance are either teachers or dancers. Most often the lecturers are choreographers - balletomanes or critics. The approach of the teacher is very different. He is in a way creating and nurturing a human being in the hopes of producing an artist. Teachers are able to see abilities and talent in a student long before it is apparent to the choreographer, the critic or the general public. Each teacher has his or her own method of bringing this talent into 'bloom'. A few teachers produce remarkable results and thousands of others stunt their students' growth. In Classical Ballet the most important teacher a student can have is the very first one. One often hears it said that anyone can start a beginner. Nothing could be more false. The faults one acquires in those first few lessons stick like leeches for a lifetime.

I have been asked on this lecture to talk on "interpretative movement". Which I prefer to call "expressive movement" because the former is a rather worn-out word very often misunderstood. One cannot interpret unless one is expressive - if you are not expressive you will not be able to interpret even your own ideas - let alone someone else's ideas.

It makes little difference if the student is interested in dance, dramatics or music; all must move expressively. And in today's Theatre there is little demarkation between any one of the performing arts. All are interrelated and the student of dance should have a peripheral knowledge of the other performing arts. One simply cannot be trained in classical ballet alone - or for that matter, Modern dance.

For the beginner in movement classical ballet is by far the best training because of its completeness in the use of the body - its rigid discipline of mind and body - for its refinement - its control and balance of all movement. In about the second or third year other training must be added. I would suggest Modern - Character and some Pantomime or acting. Music study can be a help. By Modern I do not mean Modern Jazz. If you start with that form you are really lost

as far as any serious training is concerned.

In a well planned Ballet Class there still remain elements of the ancient rituals. Certain preparatory movements and exercises that a dancer must go through daily that are as necessary to his body as food and fresh air. It is this ritualistic training of the dancer that differentiates him from the athlete. Where the athlete will train vigorously for a certain time the dancer is in constant training. Consequently, this is why the dancer far outlasts the athlete. Regardless of the printed word the best years of a dancer's life are in their 40's, with many dancing well into their 60's.

All novices in dance will begin with the same work. The muscles and limbs must be strengthened and built by a systematic program of work. Building each side of the body alike and with equal control. Exercises are contrived by the teacher to develop isolated control of each part of the body. All the time with the thought foremost in the mind that the entire body must be eventually used in complete coordination as a single unit. One student may in a year learn what another will take a lifetime to assimilate. Here is usually where the separation comes of the "true" dancer to the "trained" dancer commences. The first will have an instinctive feel for a movement where the other must analyze tediously and improve by much labor and repetition. All teachers must admit that there are these two kinds of dancers - the "true" and the "trained".

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CLASSROOM QUOTES -
You may or may not have heard.
(by W. C.)

There is little reason why the teacher should understand the student; however there is every reason why the student should understand the teacher.

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Who are you dancing for? Your ancestors?

* * * * *

Great dancing must be devoid of all artificiality - it must be as natural as breathing and walking.

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A century ago infant mortality was very high - today we save all the weaklings.

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There is an immense gap between your thoughts and your actions.

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Complete freedom of movement comes only with complete control of the body.

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Stop looking into the back end of your head.

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The successful teacher is the one who can be more stubborn than his pupils.

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Don't look at me with one eye.

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In a time when graciousness is non-existent the Ballet teacher must teach and supply this need - Ballet without it is second rate.

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You need a one shot pick-up to light your Christmas tree.

* * * * *

What you are as a person will show in your movement.

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It is usually your head that gets you into trouble.

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You look - but do not see! You listen - but do not hear!

* * * * *

You must be able to replay - exactly - a melody or movement once caught.

* * * * *

You do not try to be funny - you are or you are not.

* * * * *

Your strength and longevity is in your ability to relax.

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A well performed Plie saves your legs for your old age.

* * * * *

If we had more silence in the world there would be less trouble.

* * * * *

One cannot completely escape their ancestry.

* * * * *

Which way are you going when you coast? At no time in your life can you afford to just - coast!

* * * * *

You have to train your body to do what your brain will not do. (the reason for so much repetition).

* * * * *

An athlete's career is over in his 30's usually - a dancer's career is just beginning at this age.

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One spends ten years learning to dance - the next ten years in making a name - Usually on your decline you are a success.

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Nothing stretches further than the human skin.

* * * * *

A parent once told me that she wanted her daughter to have the fundamentals to improve her posterity.

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I will remain 'calmly active' for many years.

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A teacher who has not performed cannot give the student a complete idea of what dance is really about.

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There are two kinds of dancers - the trained dancer and the natural dancer.

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Anyone can learn the mechanics of dance but the real gift of dance actually only belongs to a few.

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What you don't do with your brain you will have to do over many times with your legs.

* * * * *

Your faults are just like tuberculosis - they are always there.

* * * * *

The best a teacher can do for some students is to keep them on their feet until they reach the altar.

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Your problem is not how to save your energy, but how to maintain and increase it - you cannot save what you do not have.

* * * * *

No dancer is born with the strength to dance - it must be built.

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Dance is a silent art - if you have anything to say - say it in silence.

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